

Thirdhand Smoke

What is Thirdhand Smoke?

Thirdhand smoke is what active smoking leaves behind – harmful toxins that linger in places where people have smoked previously. Thirdhand smoke contains a number of toxic chemical cancer-causing agents like arsenic, lead, and cyanide. Thirdhand smoke can cling to everything: hair, clothes, dust, furniture, car upholstery, restaurant walls, bowling alley floors... anywhere.

Not only does tobacco smoke have carcinogens in it, the nicotine in tobacco smoke reacts with normal chemicals in indoor air to form new carcinogens. Toxic chemicals continue to be produced on any surface the smoke touches. This process continues over time, increasing exposure and contamination. As reported in the 2006 and 2014 Surgeon General's Reports, there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke.

Who is at Risk?

Children of smokers are most at risk because of the tobacco residue that is present in the dust in the places where smoking occurred. Young children are even more at risk because they are exposed when they put their fingers in their mouths. Other people at an increased risk of exposure are hospitality and industry workers, and spouses of smokers.

Growing Awareness of Thirdhand Smoke

People are beginning to understand the dangers of thirdhand smoke.

- 23% of adults in Indiana were current smokers in 2014.
- Nationally, 95% of nonsmokers vs. 84% of smokers agreed that secondhand smoke harms children's health, but only 65% of nonsmokers vs. 43% of smokers agree that thirdhand smoke harms children.
- Parents who were involved in a tobacco cessation program were more likely to believe thirdhand smoke harms children, but heavier smokers and fathers were less likely to believe thirdhand smoke was harmful.
- Adults who recognize the danger of thirdhand smoke are more than twice as likely to have rules which prohibit smoking inside the home
- In Indiana, 83 % of households were smoke-free in 2015. 91% of nonsmokers had smoke-free homes while only 41% of smokers had smoke-free homes.

Health Effects from Tobacco Exposure

Tobacco exposure causes a number of health problems like cancer, heart disease, lung diseases, premature birth, low birthweight, stillbirth, and infant death. Secondhand smoke exposure can cause asthma attacks, respiratory and ear infections, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Research has shown that exposure to thirdhand smoke is associated with an increased risk of:

- Liver disease
- Liver cancer
- Cardiovascular disease
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), asthma, respiratory infections and SIDS
- Lung damage in utero
- Poor wound healing
- Hyperactivity

Want to Quit Smoking?

- Do not smoke in your home and car and do not allow family and visitors to do so. Infants and toddlers are especially vulnerable to the health risks from second and thirdhand smoke.
- Do not allow childcare providers or others who work in your home to smoke.
- Smokers wanting to quit should contact a health care provider for assistance and call 1-800-Quit-Now or visit www.QuitNowIndiana.com for free, evidence-based support, advice and resources.
- There are methods for treating tobacco use addiction that have been thoroughly researched and are endorsed by health care professionals. The U.S. Public Health Service issued the 2008 update to the clinical practice guideline on Treating Tobacco Use Dependence: <http://bphc.hrsa.gov/buckets/treatingtobacco.pdf>.
- Until you can quit smoking, smoke outside. Smokers trying to quit smoking are more successful in quitting if they have a smoke-free home. Moving to another room with not eliminate secondhand or thirdhand smoke.

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